

PAPERS READ.

Notes on a Collection of Snakes from Port Darwin,

By WILLIAM MACLEAY, F.L.S.

Among the many interesting and valuable things collected at Port Darwin by Mr. Spalding, not the least interesting to me are the Snakes. I have received of them about 30 good specimens, belonging to at least 12 distinct species. Some are of wide distribution and well known, or at all events well known to me—such as *Morelia variegata*, *Tropidonotus picturatus*, *Dipsas fusca*, and *Diemenia olivacea*. The first of these is found everywhere throughout New Holland, the second all over Northern Queensland (a very variable species), the third also throughout the whole of tropical Australia, and of the last I had previously seen several specimens from the Endeavour River. Others are, though described, very rare and in few collections, and were until a few days ago, only known to me by their descriptions. These are *Nardoa Gilbertii*, two fine specimens, *Cerberus Australis*, also two specimens varying very much in colour, and *Pseudonaja nuchalis*. Of this last I have only one specimen. It is of a lightish colour, but distinctly banded. There are 201 abdominal shields and 62-62 sub-caudals. Some specimens in the Australian Museum, labelled *P. nuchalis* by the late Curator, belong evidently to the other species *P. affinis*, Gunther, Ann. and Mag. Nat. Hist., 1872, ser. 4, vol. ix., p. 35, pl. iv., fig. c.

The species which appear to me to be new are as follow :—

FORDONIA VARIABILIS.

In the form and disposition of the head shields and the numbers of the scales and abdominal and sub-caudal shields, the three specimens which I have received from Port Darwin agree exactly with the description given by Dumeril and Bibron (Hist. Nat. de Rept., vol. 7, p. 884) of a species from Timor—*Fordonia leucobalia* Schlegel—the genus *Hemiodontus* Dum. and Bibr.

I can scarcely doubt however that they are of distinct species. Curiously enough Dumeril and Bibron describe three specimens of the Timor snake, all differing very widely in coloration, and I find exactly the same number of varieties in the Australian one.

1st specimen.—White above and below, with occasional black scales, abdominal shields 144; anal large and bifid; sub-caudals 30 (some entire.) Total length 2 feet 6 inches, tail $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, diameter of body (widest part) $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, scales in 25 rows.

2nd specimen.—Black with sides and belly white spotted with black, abdominal shields 148; anal large, bifid; sub-caudals 30, a few entire; scales in 25 rows. Total length 2 feet 7 inches, tail $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, diameter of body $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

3rd specimen.—The whole upper surface black, the sides and belly white, a straight line of demarcation between the two colours; abdominal shields 145; anal large, bifid; sub-caudals 26, nearly all bifid; scales in 25 rows. Total length 2 feet 4 inches, tail $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, diameter of body 1 inch.

DENDROPHIS OLIVACEA.

Abdominal shields 214, sub-caudals 130-130, scales in 13 rows. Total length 4 feet, tail 14 inches, head 1 inch.

Of very elongate form, head narrow but broader than the neck and very flat, loreal shield nearly twice as long as the height, head and neck above very dark brown or black, the upper labials yellow; all the rest of the upper surface of a pale olive brown, beneath greenish white.

The collection contains several specimens of this species at various stages of their growth.

PSEUDECHIS DARWINIENSIS.

Of more elongate form than *P. porphyriacus*. Head shields much the same as in that species, but the vertical is quite as broad as long, and much wider than the superciliaries. Scales smooth, oval, in 17 rows. Abdominal shields 212, sub-caudals $40\frac{1}{8}$. Total length 3 feet, tail $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The upper surface of the head is pale brown, and that of the body and tail reddish brown, the middle of each scale being of a lighter colour than the apex. The whole under surface is of an uniform yellowish white.

I received only one specimen of this Snake. It differs very much from *P. porphyriacus* and *Australis*, the only two species of the genus mentioned in Krefft's Snakes of Australia, but another species under the name of *scutellatus* has been described by Peters in the "Ak. Wiss. Berl. 1867, p. 710" as coming from Rockhampton. As I have never seen the last mentioned species, nor even a description of it, I cannot of course be certain that it is not identical with the one now described from Port Darwin.

BRACHYSOMA SIMILE.

Not unlike *B. diadema*. Body more enlarged towards the middle, ventral shields flatter and more angled at each side; vertical shields more elongate and perfectly triangular. Scales in 15 rows, abdominal shields 180, sub-caudals 54-54. Total length 16 inches, tail 3 inches; the front of the head as far as the middle of the occipital shields is black, and there is a black bar on the nape of the neck; with these exceptions, the entire upper surface is of a pale yellow, with the lateral margin of each scale of a reddish brown, giving the appearance of 13 narrow undulating longitudinal stripes. The under surface is entirely pale yellow.

ELAPOCEPHALUS.—New genus.

Body elongate, slender, cylindric. Tail rather long, slight, and tapering to a very fine point. Head high, and broader than neck, with short round muzzle. Eyes large, pupil round. Head shields as in *Elaps*. Scales smooth, in 15 rows. Anal shield entire. Sub-caudals in two rows. Fangs and poison glands large for the size.

The large eye and elongate tail separate this genus from *Elaps*. The plan of the head shields is exactly as in that genus, hence the name.

ELAPOCEPHALUS ORNATICEPS.

Head brown, each shield beautifully marked with variously shaped white margined black patches; on the nape, and for a short distance on each side of the neck, there is a collar of a deep sulphur orange hue. The whole upper surface of the body

and tail is of a pale slate colour, the apical half of each scale having a red tinge. The under surface is of a slaty white, excepting the head and neck which are barred and spotted with black, and the extremity of the tail which is yellow. Abdominal shields 187. Sub-caudals 90-90. Total length 10 inches, tail $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, head 5 lines.

I have only one specimen of this very beautiful snake. It is very small and slender, and yet I think it is full-grown. The depth of its head and its lurid orange mantle give it a most formidable and venomous appearance, and the comparatively large size of the fangs and poison gland would lead to the belief that the appearance is not deceptive.

The collection contains also two specimens of a *Morelia* of small size and reddish brown colour, with brown bands, which I cannot believe to be young specimens of *M. variegata*, but until I have seen more specimens at various stages of their growth, I will not attempt to characterise them as a species.

Description of a species of *Edoliosoma* from New Ireland, supposed to be the adult of *Ceblepyris schisticeps* (*Homb. et Jacq.*)

By E. P. RAMSAY, F.L.S., &c., &c.

EDOLIOSOMA SCHISTICEPS.

Ceblepyris schisticeps, Homb. et Jacq., *Voy. au Pole Sud.*, pl. X., fig. 1, *juv.*

Adult male.—Forehead, crown of the head, nape and upper part of the neck shining lead-blue, lower part of the back of the neck brown, tinged with the same color, back and scapularies brown tinged with rufous, becoming deeper in tint on the rump and upper tail-coverts, which are light rufous or chestnut brown; wings blackish-brown, the upper-coverts and secondaries broadly, and the primaries narrowly, margined on the outer webs with chestnut; tail feathers obscure reddish-brown, almost blackish at the